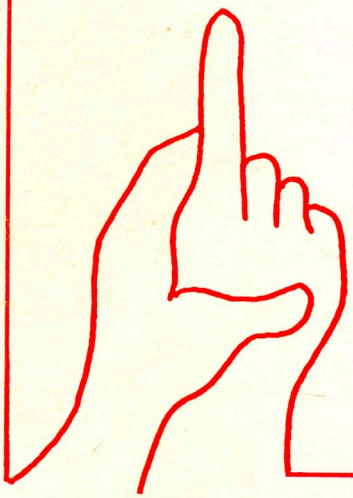
# Making Connections:
# Facilitated Communicating in an Inclusive Classroom

Karen Strandt-Conroy and Laural A. Sabin, PhD

Foreword by

Anne M. Donnellan, PhD



*"Movin' On"* Beyond Facilitated Communicating
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***"Movin' On"* Beyond Facilitated Communicating** is a series of short books written by clinicians, parents, administrators and advocates, with the cooperation of facilitating communicators, that introduce readers to the changes created by Facilitated Communicating. It is the editors' goal to provide up to date information, experience and opinion in a form accessible to everyone interested in the the welfare of people labeled developmentally disabled. Many of the topics presented in the series are still being researched by the scientific and academic communities. Every attempt will be made to keep the information current, as in a rapidly developing field such as this we believe that all concerned need to share their experiences even as we await the research results. The solution to complex situations we face will come from dialogue among practitioners, researchers and consumers. We hope this series contributes to that dialogue.

WATERLOO-WELLINGTON AUTISM SERVICES

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# Foreword

by

**Anne M. Donnellan, PhD**

A well known scholar is fond of recalling that as a child raised in a German speaking Mennonite community in the Midwest his English language skills were rudimentary entering grade school. As a direct consequence he tested poorly, was confidently tested and assessed as retarded by the school and about to be consigned to the special education classroom. The future academic's parents were appropriately appalled by this turn of events, and applied themselves successfully to correcting it. Would it were true that all such misdiagnoses were so readily remedied.

Unfortunately, there is a long dark shadow over American education that adds bite to Garrison Keillor's quip about Lake Wobegon where, "...all the children are above average."[1] Mass testing of draftees during World War I using instruments culturally biased in favor of literate native English speaking middle class city dwellers lead to the startling conclusion that in reality the average American male was *below* average![2] The same study noted that, "The Negro lies at the bottom of the scale with a mental age of 10.4 [years....and t]he average man of many nations is a moron." Another influencial researcher showing the same cavalier disregard of common sense reported in a prestigious scientific annual that his study of 'average immigrants' ....showed 83 percent of Jews, 80 percent of Hungarians, 79 percent of Italians and 87 percent of Russians to be feebleminded.[3]

For most of this century 'scientists' have argued perusasively that they can measure mental capabilities with a variety of instruments of their

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[1] *Prairie Home Companion,* PBS Radio series.

[2] Yerkes, R.M. (ed.) (1921) Psychological examining in the United States army. *Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences,* Vol. 15, 890pp.

[3] Goddard, H.H. (1917) Mental tests and the immigrant. *J. of Delinquency,* 2: 243-247.

devising. Soon the impact of the testers' numbers began to overwhelm the reality of what they were striving to describe. The numbers began to define the people. Instead of acknowledging that they could *measure* some level of ability, they let it be assumed that their subjects *had* this much ability, and no more. Millions of individual life shaping decisions have been made on the basis of those measurements; and in various ways they became imbedded both in the laws of the land (especially with regard to immigration and segregation), in the policies of our schools, and in the attitudes of Americans toward their fellow citizens.

Slowly over the years the most egregious of these insults have been addressed and, to a degree, corrected, though the scars are still visible throughout our society. It took until the 1970s for the courts to agree that children should be tested in their native language. Today, test makers and test givers are generally more cautious in addressing language and cultural issues and in attempting to assess specific skills. However, one population of the tested still remains thoroughly victimized by the numbers games. People with communication and movement impairments which interfere with ability to demonstrate their inherent or learned abilities in a standardized way endure to this day the burdens of being diagnosed with labels such as Severe, or Profound Mental Retardation, with generally severe and profound consequences for the quality of life they experience.

There is more than a bit of irony in the fact that America, the land of the free and equal has, more than any other nation, spawned and supported the idea of IQ scores as a measure of inherent mental capacity. Several states to this day place children in entirely separate school systems based on IQ, and continue to defend these policies in the courts.

Now, all that is changing. We believe that as the term is understood today, that is as a measure of mental incapacity, *there is no such thing as mental retardation*. Retardation is not a thing, its an idea, and a poor one. As Vygotsky[4] teaches us, people develop in diverse ways, but no one fails to develop. And we have only just begun to consider true diversity. We certainly do not know how to measure it.

The fascinating but tragic story of the combination of bad science, developing technology and cataclysmic social forces that disenfranchised and

4 Vygotsky, L.S. (1993) *Fundamentals of Defectology.* J. E. Knox & C.B. Stevens.(Trans). In *The Collected Works of L. S. Vygotsky Vol. 2.* NY: Plenum

institutionalized millions of citizens who appeared to have no productive value in nineteenth century and early twentieth century America, and keeps many citizens without an effective voice in their affairs even to this day, has yet to be told. That some are now in the process of gaining a voice, and being heard, is the subject for the our book series, ***"Movin' On"* Beyond Facilitated Communicating.** Our goal is to document the extraordinary changes in the lives and circumstances of people with minimal or no speech that are occurring as a result of their gaining the power to communicate. This edition picks up that theme by describing the changes that facilitated communicating brings to the classroom.

Facilitated communicating is not new. It has been demonstrated in various forms by parents of disabled children, and was described in the professional literature in the 1970s.[5] But few people took these parental reports seriously, and not until its importation from Australia in 1989 was it adopted with any enthusiasm. Now many thousands of people without speech make their thoughts, feelings and needs known, and are gradually taking control of their lives.

The promise and the threat that are embodied in the notion of a silent population finding a voice are already engaging the energies of those who have most to gain and to lose—even before the true nature of the new communications has been fully elucidated. Thus it is possible on the one hand to argue on the basis of typewritten transcripts that a population of sensitive, literate, insightful and poetic new scholars has emerged, and on the other hand convincingly to prove with orthodox scientific rigor that both communicators and facilitators are deluded optimists deceiving themselves and others with reams of verse and prose that arise in the creative unconscious of the facilitators' minds.

We believe that the truth lies firmly between these positions. Yes, hidden competencies are being revealed. And yes, again, at times facilitators may have a major impact on communicators' words. In a fashion that is far from understood, communicators and facilitators form a communicating dyad that draws creative energy from both parties to overcome an impediment to speech that renders communicators mute without their facilitators' touch.

An emerging theory that accounts for these phenomena uses

[5] Oppenheim, R. (1974) *Effective teaching methods for autistic children.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas

knowledge from the clinical care of neurology patients while drawing on the extensive scientific literature documenting movement disturbance in developmental, neurological and psychiatric disabilities. It hypothesizes that a facilitator's resistive touch operates as an accommodation to a movement disturbance in much the same way that a white cane may be an accommodation for those with limited sight. In a companion book to this one David Hill and Martha Leary[6] show how problems with starting, executing, continuing, stopping, combining and switching can impede posture, action, speech, thought, perception emotion, and memory. It is not just performance on standardized tests but virtually every aspect of living that is at risk for misinterpretation or failure if mental or physical movement mechanisms are impaired, or work only intermittently, like the speech of person who stutters. But just like the stutterer, a local or temporary inability does not signal a global incapacity. Yet that is what has so often been inferred about people without speech.

We shall never forget an encounter with a thirty year old man in a group home in California where we were consulting in Fall 1992. We were told by staff that he was a "retardate," not "autistic;" therefore he could not do this new communication. But J. introduced himself to us with a smile and a poised finger that we guessed was a request for facilitation. Sure enough J. had some things to say. Within minutes our "conversation" focused on what J. might do with a little money that was coming his way. There were a number of options like clothing, furniture, travel, or video equipment that he could choose among, but J. knew exactly what he wanted, and that, sadly, he was not about to receive. In response to the question, "What do you want?" he typed, **"an education."**

In our society education is a prerequisite for autonomy. J. knows that, and so do the new communicators and their parents. A new urgency is being felt in the struggle for inclusion, while confusion is becoming the norm in the debate over testing, and educational placement for students whose measured abilities vary dramatically depending upon whether or not they are being facilitated. But in the classroom facilitated communicating has found acceptance with some problems to be solved and many pluses. The teachers

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[6] Hill, D..A. & Leary, M.R. (1993) *Movement Disturbance: A Clue to Hidden Competencies in Person Diagnosed with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities,* Madison, WI: DRI Press

who collaborated on this book have as much experience with it as anyone in America. Their personal accounts are filled with drama though the process of including their new students proved relatively simple once they were able to make the connections: student to student; student to teacher; student to general education curriculum and social system; and teacher to teacher. Nevertheless, they learned a great deal in their first year. In sharing their insights and discoveries they may smooth the path for the thousands of other students and teachers who are following in their footsteps to inclusion.

# Introduction

*Jimmy and Dave are seated along with the rest of the sixth grade class. Jimmy is close to his neighbor, Mark, whose proximity and occasional gestures help him stay in his seat. Dave is in the front row of the class. He appears to be listening like the other students who are positioned around his desk. Karen is standing next to Jimmy and is facilitating with one finger under his wrist. Mark turns and looks at him, smiles, and pats him on the back. Karen walks to the other side of the classroom and while she is gone, Mark takes Jimmy's hand and tries to facilitate with him. Mark lets go after a few seconds as Jimmy's finger does not move toward any letters. Jimmy is waiting for Karen while she discusses the assignment with an educational assistant who will facilitate Dave and monitor another student with disabilities who is also working in the classroom.*

*Karen returns to Jimmy's side. The other students are well along with their work. Karen facilitates Jimmy and he is able to finish his assignment at the same time as the other students. As he is using a Canon communicator, the communication strips need to be taped onto his worksheet. Karen hands the sentence strips to two of Jimmy's female friends who have come up behind him while he is working. The girls tape his answers to his worksheet so that he can turn it in. Karen leaves Jimmy standing among his friends chewing a straw and makes soft noises. Dave is working on his assignment. As Dave is able to type with facilitation directly on his worksheet, his work is completed on time.*

*The teacher changes subjects from Language Arts to Social Studies. For the next fifteen minutes, both Jimmy and Dave sit and attend to the social studies lesson without additional assistance, Dave is looking around the room quite a bit while verbalizing to the girls next to him, but appears to be following the lesson fairly well. Jimmy is still sitting next to Mark. Ed,*

*the general education teacher, gives the class the direction, "Place your finger on France." Ed notices Jimmy does not have his finger on France and asks Mark to assist him. Mark facilitates Jimmy to point to France and says, "Good, you got it!" Ed hands out the homework and tells the students to put their names on their papers. Mary, Dave's friend, writes his name on the paper for him. Mark helps Jimmy use a name stamp to put his name on his paper.*

This is a typical scene in a sixth grade general education classroom where a student labelled as autistic uses facilitated communicating. This book charts a journey with facilitated communicating in a middle school setting. Despite some unique qualifications, we were not prepared for many of the situations we faced during the year. We are both certified teachers and have extensive training in autism. We share the same philosophy of teaching including the belief that all children can be successful through individualized instruction and education with their age appropriate non-disabled peers.

**Karen:** I have teacher certification in the areas of cognitive disabilities and emotional disturbance. During my years as a middle school teacher, I successfully integrated students with special education labels into the general education setting. While teaching, I maintained close ties with the University of Wisconsin, my undergraduate school, by attending seminars and University classes.

As I sensed that being one of the first teachers in my district to use facilitated communicating would prove to be eventful, and perhaps even historic, I kept a monthly journal to record the progress we made, the issues we resolved and the unexpected problems we encountered. We drew on it for the vignettes we present in the text, which are condensed and altered for brevity and privacy; and when they adopt a student's perspective blend observations with interpretation.

**Laural:** I have also been a classroom teacher, certified in both general and special education. I have worked with students with varying disabilities but my special interest is in programming and behavioral support for students with autism. I earned my doctorate the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where an early assignment was flying to Syracuse, New York, to learn about facilitated communication in one of the first workshops given by Professor Douglas Biklen. Two months later, I was

shown facilitated communication first hand by Rosemary Crossley, and shortly after began facilitating with two teenagers with autism. I had been facilitating for eight months when I began my research project in Karen's school. We had met the previous semester when Karen served as a cooperating teacher for the University's teacher training program. I was the supervisor for a student teacher in her classroom practicum, and our professional relationship began at that point. Again, despite our backgrounds and unique experiences, we were not prepared for what we were about to face.

We begin first by sharing excerpts from Karen's personal journal as she recounts events and emotions she experienced as a classroom teacher and facilitator. Next, Laural relates some of her observations as a participant observer in the middle school. Then, together we share strategies and recommendations from our experiences. We end with a commentary on facilitated communicating that reflects our years of experience with it. Alert readers will have noted that we refer to facilitated communicating, not communication. We believe that the subtle but real distinction helps remind us that we are discussing an infinitely variable activity, not a definable concept with fixed boundaries.

Our journey was educational, frustrating, exciting, exasperating, and at times unbelievable. It cost us lots of time, energy, effort, and money (for all the lunches, dinners, happy hours, and lengthy long-distance phone calls that we felt were essential as we dealt with intense and novel developments). We invite you to join us as we retrace our steps, beginning in summer school, 1991.

# I

## A Teacher's Year

Initially, my thoughts about facilitated communicating reflected the skepticism professionals of every stripe adopt when someone from outside their field tells them about a "breakthrough" that threatens to undermine much of what they believe. When I heard that students I had taught in the past were using a new technique to express some incredible thoughts and feelings my first reaction was denial. I had experience with those students. I had been responsible for assessing and developing programs to meet their needs. Could I have had such inaccurate perceptions of them? I thought I knew those students so well; could I really have been so blind? With a reasonable amount of modesty, I just did not think so.

But as I heard more and more information about the successes of students using facilitated communicating I moved from denial to excitement. At the time available information was very limited. I talked with teachers and read as much as I could find (mostly articles by Rosemary Crossley and Dr. Biklen). I was totally intrigued, but still skeptical about the process.

*July*

I was told in June that a student who had begun facilitated communicating two months earlier would be coming to my school. I felt both anxious and very interested about getting a chance to work with a student who might "prove" the value of facilitation to me. If it "worked" I would have to be prepared to surrender many of my assumptions about teaching "these kids." If it didn't, I could continue my current practices.

*August*

As his parents had successfully applied for summer school support for Jimmy, I was able to spend some time with him before we started formal classes. I had no training in facilitation, but on my initial outing with Jimmy I watched his mother wrap herself around him to hold him secure, then grasp his hand over a keyboard in order to steady him so that he could type. Another special education teacher accompanied me on the outings, and having her along to problem solve with us was very beneficial. Our initial attempts at facilitated communicating seemed to be just chance strikes at the keys. I became frustrated. What was his mother doing that I could not? I tried to replicate all the physical assistance that I had seen her give but I was not getting the same success. I also felt very stressed. We had taken this eleven year old boy out for the afternoon, but neither of us could communicate with him. I left that day feeling confused, frustrated and more skeptical.

Before my second visit I began to realize that I needed to take a calmer approach. I was aware that on the first visit my feelings of frustration mirrored Jimmy's frustration. We were already on the same wavelength—we could relate to each other without *having* to facilitate. Instead I needed to relax a little, let Jimmy be himself, and have him get to know me. Then we could work at facilitating, without being obsessed with it. This time the outing went well. The other teacher and I took turns attempting facilitated communicating and then suddenly I was able to feel his hand move toward the keys on the Canon communicator. I could hardly believe it, but still I felt it! I was really able to feel him spell out a word! Suddenly I was no longer so suspicious. By the end of the day he was typing one and two word responses. As the outings continued, Jimmy became more fluent when facilitating with me though he still had difficulty facilitating with the other teacher.

*September*

Fortunately Jimmy and I were able to spend a good deal of the summer practicing, so by the end of August we had become fairly fluent communicators. I was still fascinated every time that I got to facilitate with him. Even though it was very exhausting as he required assistance in controlling his whole body, I wanted to facilitate him as much as I could. We managed only a few sentences a day, and no real course work was getting done. But I began saving the printed strips that the communicator

generated. Even small strips with just one **"y"** or **"n."** By now I was bonding with Jimmy; we were starting a very special friendship. He lacked any shyness about asking me questions and was soon very interested in my personal life. He had never had an unmarried teacher, and teased me about having a boyfriend. He typed information and questions to my fiancé Rick, such as, **"when will you marry strandt."** Rick got into the spirit of the relationship very quickly. Soon I was mediating general conversations between them.

*October*

Initially I was the only fluent facilitator at school who could communicate with Jimmy. The feeling of being the "lone" voice disturbed me. On the one hand, there was no doubt that I felt proud and "special." It was very reinforcing to have that much trust from another person, and there was a definite bond between the two of us. On the other hand, there was a sense of immense responsibility. I felt I needed to be with him every minute of the day–for truly I was his voice. His world changed drastically when I was absent. I wished this could have been my full-time job. It was not. I was supporting up to ten other students in various environments and had responsibilities to them as well. I often felt there was not enough "me" to go around.

Then suddenly my problems were overshadowed by the tragedy of a student's accidental death. In a mourning exercise Jimmy and his classmates were invited to express their feelings in writing. Jimmy composed a moving poem that revealed his emotional depth and understanding. His powerful statement went a long way to convince his peers and teachers of his competence; and helped them focus on his strengths rather than his limitations.

*November*

Another student, Dave, who I was supporting in the same integrated environment as Jimmy, began imitating some of Jimmy's behaviors. He said to me, *"I want to communicate...Canon"* At first I hesitated, not quite sure if I should try facilitated communication with him.* But I knew his current IEP included typing objectives, so I tried the typewriter with him. He typed random letters until I offered some resistance to his arm, and then he typed, **"i like candybars snickers."**

* Because he obviously could use his own voice to communicate, though with a lot of echoing.

With mixed emotions I ran to the teachers' lounge to get a candy bar for him. I was happy, scared, anxious, and amazed all at the same time. Then I went to share the information with other people in the school, hoping to get the support I already anticipated I would need in the future. Most people were as amazed as I was, but as it turned out I did not receive much support until the last months of school. Talking to my fiancé, who is also a special education teacher, and to Laural helped, but no one was "in the thick of it" everyday as I was. I came to rely a good deal on the teaching assistants who were supportive and encouraging, and gradually becoming fluent facilitators themselves.

Looking back, I realize that we should have planned to integrate facilitation into the classrom more systematically, and provided adequate support for everyone involved with facilitating. I had become the voice for two people, and the feeling of being overwhelmed intensified. By now I wanted to slow things down. I wanted to feel secure with the two students I was facilitating. My fantasy was to get adequate support systems to accommodate their needs. I wanted to make sure there were both people and equipment (letterboards, typewriters, communicators) available to students at all times. Most of all I wanted to train more facilitators.

I planned that as soon as I had a few more staff facilitating I would see what we could do for a third student, Susan, who I thought also might be ready to communicate this way. But without waiting, two teachers experimented with her, unsuccessfully. Other staff who were taking an interest thought it would be a good idea to ask the two facilitating students what strategies might help. One of them typed, **"try strandt."** My year was turning into a nightmare!

I wanted to say, "Wait a minute, not yet!" Then I thought about the ethics of not working with her after attempts at facilitating had been made, so I went against my better judgement and explored with her. Sure enough, she gave every sign of wanting to communicate. At this point, I felt as though I was in way over my head. I needed to have support but I went ahead without it. My initial attempts were a bit awkward, but I got advice from the other facilitated students on where and how to hold her. Within a week we were fairly fluent. Now I was the voice for a third student.

By now we had observed a number of curious events suggesting that our students were much more in touch with each other than we ever anticipated. Dave and Jimmy's insistence that we start facilitating with

Susan was the most direct information to that effect. It was time to ask them how they knew she wanted to communicate.

All three typed that they were able to talk with one another! I was totally confused. Even though there was already a good deal of evidence that they knew information they had never been told, I could not really believe what they were reporting. All three students had previously been taught in a self-contained environment (at another school) and had been together a great deal, so they surely knew each other well. But that is true for lots of students. On the other hand, I had had several uneasy moments when Jimmy typed things about me that I could not figure out how he knew. "Can they really talk to one another?" "How are they in tune with my thoughts?" "Do I believe what they are telling me?" "Who do I ask without jeopardizing my credibility?" "How do they do it?" The questions snowballed in my mind. I began to feel afraid and very lonely.

It was not long before I talked with Laural about my experiences. Then we shared our information with Professor Anne Donnellan at the University of Wisconsin, who was Laural's advisor (and now mine). She had talked with facilitators from all over the country who were reporting similar experiences about communicators' extraordinary knowledge! Dr. Dennellan did not know what to make of it any more than I did, but at least she was willing to talk about it, so I was not alone.

Facilitated communicating was suddenly becoming more complex. After completing academic work we often just let the kids type, still thrilled that we had established this relationship, but some of what they were reporting was pretty mischievious. We were being told things that were not true and other material that the kids had no right to know, or to pass on.

We realized it was time to come down hard on inappropriate messages—to clarify that they must confine classroom communicating to school and academic issues, and information they wanted to share about themselves. Information that was not public knowledge was not to be discussed. With that the esoterica quieted down; but from time to time it seemed as if there was a good deal of communication between the kids through channels we had no access to.

*December*

This month was used as a time to catch up and provide, as best I could, more adequate communicating options for our three students. Typewriters were brought in from home, angled communication boards

were constructed (we had found it often easier for the students to type if the keyboard was mounted more steeply), and activities structured around communication objectives were added to regular daily activities to increase facilitated communicating practice.

During this time, students were still showing preferences for specific facilitators. We discovered that they would purposely act out with a less fluent facilitator in order to get a more fluent facilitator to assist them. Occasionally, all three students would use challenging behavior to get their choice of facilitator. We developed several counterstrategies to cope with this competition, and worked out some well-defined schedules that included both descriptions of the activities and the names of facilitators. These were shared with the students each day. The students cooperated by letting us know which facilitators they preferred for selected activities. There were times, of course, when all their wishes could not be met.

By now students' lesson plans were redesigned to include facilitated communicating whenever possible, and educational objectives were modified or added to cater to their newly discovered skills. When the equipment was working, students had adequate access to the communication devices. Enough of the staff were fluent facilitators to permit students to be around people with whom they could communicate with for at least fifty percent of the day. All the parents who expressed interest in learning to facilitate had begun, with varying degrees of success. Work still needed to be done, but I was finally feeling that the world of teaching was manageable once again.

*January*

One day, shortly after I began facilitating with her, Susan became markedly upset. Her body went rigid and she vocalized more sounds. I asked how I could help her and said that sometimes it helps to talk problems out. She decided to try typing out her feelings. She explained to me that she thought a fourth student was able to facilitate. She said that she had "talked" with him and he was very angry that we had not been facilitating with him. I explained to her that I would try to facilitate with him later in the day. She remained agitated and typed back to me, **"go type with andy now."** I said that it was her turn to facilitate with me and I was concerned that she would be giving up her time to talk. I did not want her to become angry as she had a history of difficulty controlling her aggressive behaviors. She reached over and tried to bite my arm. I asked her to use

words or let someone facilitate her if she was upset with me. I assured her that I would listen to her and not be upset regardless of what she might type. She responded, **"go to him now miss strandt."**

I walked over to Andy who was working with an educational assistant. The assistant told me that Andy had been physically aggressive and had been screaming much of the last half hour. I said I wanted to try facilitated typing with him. Andy was known to be very sensitive to touch. I told him I knew this might be difficult for him, but invited him to use my hand for support. I assured him that we would do nothing that he did not initiate. I also explained to him that we might need to practice facilitating a while to get more comfortable with each other. Three other teachers observed as we tried to facilitate. The first couple of keys seemed to be hit randomly. Then he typed **"f... you people."**

I had not anticipated this kind of comment. I was shocked, saddened and confused that these had been his first three words. The other students had expressed affection and gratitude when they started facilitating, but Andy was clearly angry. Later that day, when he felt calmer, he typed other messages and I began to get to know him better. He went on to explain with facilitated communicating that when was angry he hit people in order to enrage them.

As I thought about Andy's history of aggressive outbursts, the content of his first communication did not seem so shocking. Still I was shaken because of the timing. Andy let us know later that he was upset because we had not begun trying to facilitate his communication along with the other students. Our reasons had been that Andy already had communication systems which he used to express feelings. He could vocalize a little, and would shout, "Mmaaddd!" when he was angry. Or he would sign "Mad." He also used a picture system to indicate needs. But perhaps the principle reason we had not thought of trying facilitation with him was because he was labelled "mentally retarded" not "autistic." We had inadvertantly been operating on the notion that facilitated communicating was for "autistic people" only. Andy fortunately demolished that myth for us.

In the past we had used individualized stress management and behavior strategies with some success with Andy, but he was always liable to act out unpredictably. I quickly learned that his anger was far from random. He had some real gripes. I found myself trying to provide

counseling to an individual who was very angry. It would have been very helpful to have a counselor or therapist work with him and with me. I did search out professionals for assistance and advice, but had little success. Now I was a voice, facilitator, teacher, counselor and advocate for a student who was very much in need.

As I drove home from school one night soon after beginning to help Andy facilitate I again began to question the whole idea of facilitated communicating: its validity, meaning and effect. I think I was looking for a way out. If I could convince myself that it was not real then I would not have to deal with all the baggage that came along with it. If facilitated communicating was not valid, I could retreat to a place where I was knowledgeable and comfortable. But I could not deny what I was seeing every day. Indeed, facilitated communicating was a wonderful breakthrough for people with communication difficulties; and that it also marked a paradigm shift in our understanding of autism and retardation. I began re-examining everything I thought I knew.

I could only conclude that facilitated communicating was changing students' lives. I had seen many behavioral improvements in the students using it. Students were displaying more appropriate body gestures that corresponded to their communications. And most persuasive of all, I was continually facilitating information that was new to me. It was clear, too, that at times they could be manipulative, flatter a favored facilitator, or remain uncommunicative with another.

I realized that in the prior months, all I had seen of facilitated communicating was the "tip of the iceberg." I took it at face value. Now I was challenged to see the true meaning of communicating, seeing it in a different, more global context; I was still positive, yet more cautious. I realized that facilitated communicating was not something to start without thought, because once begun we must be ready to respond to everything that is communicated. I tried to explain to the people I worked with that facilitated communicating requires a commitment that should never be taken lightly.

*February*

Andy's transition into a communicating world was less chaotic then the other student's. Staff were already accustomed to facilitated communicating and we used that experience and knowledge to everyone's advantage.

But Andy continued to be aggressive, both in his words and his behaviors. I decided to call a meeting with Andy, his parents and the other teacher who works closely with him. The meeting was going well, and I felt good that Andy seemed able to articulate many of his feelings to us. Then he began first to kiss and then to bite my arm, breaking the skin. I was very upset. I had been trying to help him and wound up getting badly hurt. I was angry, and also afraid that he might hurt other facilitators.

Fortunately I was able to realize that his behaviors were not always deliberate. We had already begun to look at our students as possessing competencies they could not normally express because of problems with movement—both fine motor choices and global behaviors. They had repeatedly told us that their bodies did things that they could not control. It made it easier to tolerate challenging behaviors, but when I got hurt I realized we all still have a long way to go!

We worked on strategies to assist Andy control his movements and emotions without putting the rest of us at risk. For a while I used an arm guard I bought for rollerblading when I facilitated him. As a sense of trust built up quickly I discontinued using it. However, when I suspected we were about to deal with material that could tap into his anger I facilitated him from the other side of the table. That worked out well, and gradually Andy settled into the class routines.

*March*

This month was filled with report writing and planning and attending Individual Education Programs (IEPs) which gave me a chance to reflect on the year's events. It was evident that both the students and the staff had progressed a great deal since our initial introduction to facilitated communicating. As I reviewed the records for each quarter I could see continuous and marked improvement across the board. Both the number of facilitators and the volume of communication had increased for all of the students.

I had worked with students who were using facilitated communicating and with others who were not, and had seen the advantages to all of them of being integrated into a general education setting. I recalled the skeptism we had heard before we placed them in the sixth grade classroom. Now I was able to see the problems we had worked through, and the positive effects of working in the general education environment. Laural videotaped two of the students along the way. Viewing

the tapes we were able to watch the students interact with the peers in a very appropriate and exciting manner, which was very reinforcing to us. General education students were facilitating students during group activities. General education students problem solved to allow the students with communication difficulties to participate in classes. Our students were true members of the class.

The general education environment and facilitated communicating seemed to have a positive influence on behavior. General education peers provided role models to the other students. An incentive to work and produce like the other students motivated the students using facilitation to work to their best ability possible. The changes were documented in the IEP, but they also had a powerful positive impact on all the people involved: teachers, peers, parents, support staff and administrators.

*April*

We knew that it was time to make sure the gains we had seen become the foundation of new policies of inclusion for students with alternative forms of communication. As there was a possibility that I would be going to graduate school in the fall I decided to include facilitated communicating into every possible activity, reasoning that this would increase the chances of facilitation being continued when I was no longer present.

In retrospect, I suspect that I should not have made facilitated communicating a student objective, but simply stressed improved communication, and let facilitated communicating be one way to accomplish this. I may have become too single-minded about it, as I sought out teachers and parents for consultations about how they could maintain facilitated communicating with their students and children.

It was at this time that we explored in more detail the hypothesis that movement disturbances of various kinds may mask hidden competencies and underlie communication problems of people diagnosed with autism and other developmental disabilities which Dr. Donnellan in Madison and David Hill and Martha Leary in Toronto were developing.[1] This concept explained how offering resistance could provide an accomodation to a movement disorder, and "facilitate" our students' communicating. Laural and I reviewed this possibility with the students, theorized about accommodations we had already made, and imagined additional

[1] See Hill and Leary, op cit, p. viii.

accommodations we might explore. Our subsequent interventions emerged from classroom observations and collaborative problem solving between facilitators and communicators. As much as possible these accommodations were documented and integrated into lesson plans to improve student performance.

The following four interventions helped Jimmy and Dave cope with some of their movement disorders:

At times Dave would type, **"make my mouth stop talking."** To decrease Dave's unwanted vocalizing we offered an adapted sign (touching the mouth). He learned to repeat the sign on his own mouth, and this physical cue helped him to stop. Other students would model the sign when it was not appropriate to talk. It seemed very important that people not verbally tell Dave to be silent as this had the contrary effect of increasing his unwanted verbalizations.

Dave also asked for assistance learning to go down stairs without using **"baby steps"** (his term for leading with the same foot at every stair). Dave felt that it was important for his safety that he keep up with peers when walking between classes. Initially, we thought if he could feel the movement he would be able to repeat the movement, so the person accompanying him down the stairs would offer a physical cue to his leg. Although the physical prompt was successful. It looked odd, and we had difficulty fading it, which limited his independence and was no help with peers. We experimented with two color cues placed on alternate steps to use as visual targets for each foot. It worked. Then all we needed was to get the other 600 students in school to leave the stickers on the steps! We spent a fair bit of time replacing stickers, but after a couple of weeks Dave was negotiating the familiar stairways without the cues.

Jimmy's body was in almost constant motion. Professionals working with him had assumed he was trying to get away from tasks. With facilitated communicating Jimmy informed us that he wanted to sit but his body would not relax. His parents told us they used music to calm him down, but that was not always practical in the classroom. Jimmy asked for physical assistance to help him to sit. Initially he needed full body support which meant having his facilitator wrap herself around him, using both legs and her free hand to restrain his unwanted movements. Later, with the use of a desk that extended back to his abdomen (to support but not enclose him), and more limited physical support Jimmy was able to sit for

periods of up to forty-five minutes. Then we found that he was able to stay in his desk longer when his fellow students sat closely around him, perhaps providing psychological as well as physical boundaries.

To decrease his running when Jimmy was not in a desk a variety of other accommodations were used. Jimmy wore a belt bag which people could hold. He found this is an acceptable check on his running. But walking in the middle of a knot of students who offered him natural boundaries was far the best accomodation. We noticed that as Jimmy's independence increased his motor control was greater in familiar surroundings and doing customary routines.

Jimmy also had difficulties with eating, and was self-conscious in the cafeteria. Our first accomodation was to prepare his food in much smaller portions and place it where it was easier to access. When food required utensils, we tried to limit the motor planning required by placing the food on a weighted fork which provided him with resistance. Jimmy was then better able to move the fork to his mouth.

These examples are just a few of the many adjustments we learned to make to help our students adapt to new settings. Often our accomodations were almost instinctive, and many were discovered by accident. Usually they were collaborations with ourselves and the students. But making a cognitive shift and seeing inappropriate behaviors as the consequence of movement disturbances rather than "self-stimming" or voluntary acts made it far easier to work out techniques to counter them.

*May*

The last full month of school was peaceful. Activities focused on fun after all the tests had been completed. June fourth, the last day of school was very emotional for me. Since I had been accepted for a full-time graduate program I would not be returning to teach in the fall. Trying to say good-bye to some of the staff members without losing it to tears was almost impossible. The teaching assistants and I had become very close during some of the rougher times, and to leave them was extremely difficult. I also had to say good-bye to some of the students I had seen blossom into real personalities. I planned to see most of them again, but knowing that I would not be their teacher the following year saddened me. The students and I all cried as we parted for the summer. Looking back, I found myself hoping that the students learned as much from me as I had learned from them.

# II

## Difficulties Using Facilitated Communicating in a Classroom

*Fifty–two sixth grade students are seated at their desks, noisily getting folders from their backpacks while talking to one another. Jimmy, a student labelled as autistic, is sitting in his seat with his special education teacher Karen. Karen is holding Jimmy by the trunk and shoulders to help him keep his body still. Jimmy now moves on top of Karen's lap at his desk. Jimmy is making "uh–uh–uh" noises, flailing his arms, and looking around the room. His body is in constant motion.*

*Mrs. Conklin, a general education teacher, begins to give directions to the whole class on a math review assignment. The class goes quiet and listens. She provides examples of three digit addition with regrouping, and the students settle down to work on their papers.*

*Karen says to Jimmy, "Do you understand what we are supposed to do?" Karen envelopes Jimmy's body, reaches around him, holds his left arm down to his side with her left arm, and provides support under his right hand with her right hand. Jimmy has his index finger extended. Jimmy continues to "uh–uh–uh," reaches toward a small typewriter, a communicator, on the desk and types,* **"y."**

*Karen says, "So what do you think is the answer to the first one?" and waits for a response. Jimmy squirms but his finger does not move. Karen waits two minutes, a long time in any classroom. Meanwhile, Mrs. Conklin is walking around the room looking at students' papers and making comments, "You've got it!" "Good answer!"*

*Karen says, "Are you going to start typing? Do you want to look at someone's?"*

*Jimmy types,* ***"show me yours and explain."***

*Karen and Jimmy get up from their seat and walk to the desk next to Jimmy's where Lauren is seated. Karen stays very close to Jimmy and holds on to the belt bag he wears around his waist. Karen has torn off the paper strip from Jimmy's communicator and placed Jimmy's sentence on Lauren's desk. Lauren reads, looks at Jimmy, and holds up her paper.*

*She says, "Jimmy, you have to add the right column and then carry."*

*Karen says, "Does that help?"*

*Jimmy responds,* ***"y."***

*Lauren says, "Jimmy you can check your answers with mine if you want. See, I have the first row finished, OK?" She holds up her paper for Jimmy to see.*

*Jimmy types,* ***"ok".***

*Karen asks, "Do you want to see anyone else's?"*

*Jimmy types,* ***"y chris."*** *Karen and Jimmy walk up to the front of the room to Chris's desk and Karen puts the sentence strip on it. Chris reads, smiles and stands up next to Jimmy.*

*Chris begins to explain "All you gotta do is figure out...." While Chris is explaining this to Jimmy, two other nearby sixth graders stand up and come over to see what is happening. All three students stand and wait for Jimmy to respond even though it is taking a while for him to type back a message to Chris because he is pulling away from Karen and trying to free his arms.*

*When he finishes, Karen reads his message out loud. It says* ***"thanks chris."***

*Karen and Jimmy return to Jimmy's desk, sit down to begin working on Jimmy's paper.*

*As they get started, Mrs. Conklin announces, "It's time to go to French class. You should have at least half of your paper done by now and you can finish the rest later."*

*Knowing that Jimmy hasn't even begun, Karen says to Jimmy, "Don't worry. I will try to find some time to work on this with you during the lunch hour."*

*Jimmy types,* ***"thanks, you are the best karen. i dont know what i would do without you."***

*The other sixth grade students are out of their seats and as a group begin to leave the classroom talking and laughing. Chris approaches*

*Jimmy and puts his arm around his neck and says, "How's it going buddy?"*

*As the students walk down the hall in a bunch, Jimmy is in the middle walking with Chris and surrounded by four or five other students. As usual, they have taken over Karen's role.*

As a participant observer and researcher I was in the classroom with the students and facilitators who were using facilitated communicating several days a week throughout the year. Facilitated communicating was still quite new when the school year began, and very few people in the area had even tried it. Relatively little information was available, particularly about using facilitated communicating in school. Consequently, Karen and I dealt with difficulties on our own or talked them over in telephone consultations with other teachers and researchers. While I observed the whole classroom, my research focused on closely following Jimmy and Dave. These two students were the first students in the school to start facilitating and they were both in the same general education classroom. Many issues arose during the year, but three became particularly salient because they were long-standing problems which we could not easily solve or understand. They were:

(1) Difficulties with regard to time,

(2) Problems with privacy, and

(3) Discrepancies between what students typed and what they said or how they acted. Each is addressed below.

***Difficulties with regard to time.***

The first issue had to do with rate—the time needed to respond. As our students began to demonstrate competency in general education classes the extensive time they took to generate answers became a frustration for them and for us. This was especially true when a teacher posed a question to a class. By the time the facilitated communicator had finished typing an answer, the teacher had usually moved on to a different question or topic. This was also a problem in the hallway when a peer would say something in passing but could not stop and wait for a typed response while rushing to class before the bell.

I asked the students using facilitated communicating to describe ways in which they tried to deal with this problem.

Answers included, **"abbriviate,"** and type **"just the first letter wovrd."** This often involved using partial words or one letter responses to stand for commonly used words (e. g. **"y"** for 'yes,' **"u"** for 'you' or **"bec"** for 'because'). Letterboards were customized with commonly used words and phrases such as, "I don't know" and, "I don't want to talk now" to speed up their communication.

Another response was,**"i mske short seentences."** Students would often type in short phrases or sentences. Punctuation was frequently disregarded. Students rarely used complete sentences.

Dave typed, **"talk with my mouth."** Students with some verbal skills would speak in addition to typing. When a facilitator was not available, students had to rely more on their voices or sounds to communicate, and certainly we wanted to encourage any independent communication. In general, however, these methods were far less effective for them. Over time we did note some students made progress toward more appropriate speech. We also learned that some echolalic expressions approximate messages that students want to convey. Jimmy says, "Happy, happy" to express a range of positive affects, and Dave repeats, "You want to talk?" when he would like to be facilitated.

Even with these time-saving strategies, the rate difficulties were not solved and the students chronically ran the risk of appearing less competent because of their delayed answers, or abbreviated words.

Another difficulty was finding the time we needed to spend with each student. Because our absence from a student's side ended the student's ability to communicate, every spare moment was spent facilitating. Given the multitude of other teaching responsibilities, this was always a problem. It was not possible for a person who knew how to facilitate to be with students in need at all times. Students often had to wait long periods to communicate. This difficulty was alleviated as the year progressed and more of the general education teachers and students began to facilitate.

***Issues of privacy.***

An issue that we faced all year was the privacy of the typed responses. **"to much people see read," "make me feel no privacy,"** were typical comments. At first, everything the students communicated was liable to be read by people they were not necessarily addressing. Usually what they typed was in full view of other students in nearby desks, or teachers who circulated through the room. Sometimes a group of students

would gather behind them to read what they were typing, and when it was a personal message they were asked to come back later.

The electronic communicator that was used primarily by one student provides a written printout. His private thoughts were all recorded on sentence strips which were easily lost, misplaced, or accidentally dropped on the floor. When a message was found on the floor, there was never much doubt about which of the fifty two sixth graders had typed it!

Over time these problems were partially resolved by our being far more careful about the disposal of printouts, and reminding ourselves that written materials remain the property of the author. We learned to use letterboards for personal comments as they leave no record, and can be angled to offer more privacy. We also used electronic displays that did not print when responses needed to be preserved only briefly. Jimmy learned to tap a student to gain his attention if he wanted to communicate with him, and then only that student would be allowed to read his message. Jimmy also used phrases like **"be quiet"** when he wanted a private exchange with another person. We encouraged them to claim their right to privacy, and found they appreciated having confidentiality respected as we tried to make sure they retained control over their communications.

***Discrepancies between written messages and gesture, gaze, and speech***

The third major issue that we faced daily in facilitated communicating was caused by the differences between how our students appeared and how they desired or intended to appear. For example, Jimmy rarely looked as though he was paying attention because his eyes were in constant motion and he seemed unaware of his surroundings. But his responses to questions showed comprehension of the environment and of the conversation that was taking place around him. In addition, he frequently looked around the room while his arms or legs moved in what appeared to be a struggle to get away from his facilitator. When he was asked if he wanted to stop typing he usually responded, **"no,"** even though it looked as though he did. Occasionally he even looked physically distressed or in pain, but when asked about this he usually only expressed a need for more support for his body and a desire to keep working on the communicator.

Once, during a five-minute timed math test Jimmy was seated on

Karen's lap at a desk making distressing noises and forcefully pushing his legs against the floor as he typed the answers to the questions. Because of this awkward arrangement the chair they were sitting in was pushed back some six feet from its original position. They talked about it after handing in the test, and Karen asked if he was in pain. He said he had been fine and declined a need for break before his next assignment.

As we have learned to view our students as coping with a range of movement disturbances, some of these behaviors began to be viewed as involuntary, and having little to do with the content of their communicating.

For Dave the situation was more complex. In addition to facilitated communicating, Dave also has some speech. On occasions when he was greeted and then asked a question, he responded with an appropriate answer and then went on to make numerous verbal comments or ask somewhat related questions. The discrepancy for him was that his typed comments, questions and answers often differed from those he had spoken.

During most interactions, Dave would be both talking and typing, and only rarely did the two correspond. In fact, we taped and analyzed a thirty five minute interview with Dave in November, and found major discrepancies in his verbalizations and typed responses. At one point in the interview Dave was typing about what it was like for him before he started facilitated communicating and he was expressing some very personal feelings. At the same time that this was occurring, he was verbally asking me questions: "Can you turn this up?" "Are they coming?" "Can you work on it?" "Laural, is this coming?" "Can you get that?" Later, when he was typing what he believed the sixth graders thought about him (**"they think i am smarter"**) he continually asked questions referring to a drink I had at my desk. "Is that your pop?" "Is that Mountain Dew?" "Are you drinking pop at school?" In retrospect I wondered if he had been trying to ask for something to drink, and the comments were as close as he could get to his question.

Most of Dave's verbalizations were related to objects or events in the environment which were within his visual range. At the beginning of one interview, I asked his permission to ignore what he said and instead pay attention to what he typed. He immediately responded by typing **"yes please**

**thanks laural."** *

On several other occasions Karen asked Dave about what he said with his voice and Dave typed, **"im just babbling,"** or, **"my words dont mean anything,"** or, **"ignore them."**

Dave was also asked what he does when Karen is not around to facilitate with him and he responded, **"try to say it with my mouth."** When I asked if that worked for him, he typed **"no i get really angry"**

On another occasion Dave offered this explanation: **"the right words dont come out," "it just comes out."** Yet another time when this topic was being discussed Dave typed that he could talk with his mouth, **"if i think real hard so i say thee right wordss not goofy."**

One day we went to a mall to eat lunch. Karen asked Dave where he wanted to eat. He looked all around the restaurants in the food court and said, "McDonalds." When she asked him again with a letterboard and facilitation, he typed **"taco bell."** Up at the counter at Taco Bell, Karen asked Dave what he wanted to order and he said immediately, "Soft taco and medium Pepsi." Then reached for the letterboard and typed, **"chicken burrito and small** ** **mountain dew."**

Karen asked him to practice saying, "Chicken burrito and a small Mountain Dew," but even though he tried to repeat it numerous times, he was unable to do so. During one attempt he got close by saying "Chicken burrito and medium Pepsi!"

Over the year Dave's verbalizations began more often to match what he typed. Karen noted in his record in April, when this began to happen, "What he is typing and what is coming from his mouth seem to be more on topic, or more the same thing. More often than not, however, Dave still needs to request that attention be directed to his typing and not his voice."

We found another interesting thing about Dave's speech. When faced with a forced choice Dave was much less able to speak accurately. For example, during snack time Dave was pouring juice for three other classmates who were seated at the table. Dave had already given cups of juice to two of the three students when the teaching assistant pointed to the last cup and asked him:

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* We learned to regard some of Dave's comments as similar to his and other students movement disturbances; behaviors we used to call "self–stims," over which they may have very little control.

** Dave asked for a small drink because he was budgeting his money. The outing included an exercise in financial planning.

Jane: "Who is this one for?" (The third student was Andy.)

Dave: "This is for Mark." (Mark was not in the room.)

Jane: "Is Mark here?"

Dave: "No. Miss Strandt." (Karen was in the library.)

Jane: "She isn't here either"

Dave: "Rachel" (There was no Rachel in the room.)

Jane: "Who's going to get it? What other student doesn't have a drink yet?"

Dave: "Tom." "Miss Strandt."

At this point, Jane took Dave to the typewriter and he typed **"andy"**—the name of the last student at the table. Thus, it appeared as if Dave knew the answer, but in that circumstance was not able to say it. In other contexts Dave's speech was better if he was asked more open ended questions such as, "What's in the cupboard?" instead of, "Is there popcorn or crackers in the cupboard?"

In summary, for both Jimmy and Dave it appeared as if their knowledge, desires or intentions were not always evidenced by their speech, vocalizations or body movements. Although this was displayed in different ways by each student, these discrepancies between what was said or done and what was typed using facilitated communicating were repeatedly documented.* As the year progressed and we read more about neurological impairments we realized how similar these behaviors are to neurological conditions described in case studies by Oliver Sacks,[2] and to difficulties described by a fellow graduate student who has a stutter and often cannot say the word in her head, though she can easily say something related but less precise.

* What was usually apparent in their behavior, however, was their willingness to communicate via facilitation. They were typically cooperative, focused and eager to continue.

2 See especially, Sacks, O. (1985). *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat,* New York: Summit Books, and Sacks, O. (1990). *Awakenings.* New York: Harper Collins.

# III

## Strategies and Recommendations for Introducing Facilitated Communicating to the General Education Classroom

The following vignette was reviewed by the student it most closely describes. He said it largely reflected his experience, but fell short of expressing all his emotions. The sentences in bold type are actual transcripts.

*"Hi Jimmy!" It's Marg, one of the teaching assistants. She meets me at the car so that she can hold on to me as we go into school and down the hall. Sometimes my body is so active that I can't control all that I do. Marg seems in a good mood and she is asking me about my weekend. She knew I couldn't answer her questions at the time without a letterboard and facilitation, but it was nice that she was treating me like normal and not like I was stupid.*

*I was thinking about that this morning on the way to school.* ***I used to hate my old school. Everyone thought I was retarded and I had no friends.*** *It was awful.* ***I'm really glad that I started typing. I'm really happy to be in the regular sixth grade classroom. The other kids like me, they listen to me, and they think I'm smart. I never dreamed I could be so popular.***

*We arrive at my locker and now I need Marg to help me with my coat and backpack. Once this is done, I head for my class. All the kids are sitting in their desks talking and joking around a bit. Marg and I sit down too. I see Chad over at his desk and I wonder what he thought about the hockey game he told me he was going to go to on Saturday. I know his team won; I saw it on TV. I try to get up to walk over to him but Marg is holding me back.*

*It's hard sometimes because my teachers can't tell if I want to get up and go see a friend or if my body is just moving around like it usually does. It helps now with the communicator and facilitation because I can tell them what I want but sometimes the communicator gets left in my backpack or it breaks and then they are just guessing. Sometimes it's hard when a person doesn't know how to hold my body and steady my arm so I can type. I get frustrated too because I know exactly what I want to say or do but they either hold me the wrong or pull back my hand so much that I can't get to the letters I need. I think they get frustrated, too, because sometimes when they get the facilitation just right,* ***I mistype or mess up to test them.*** *I need to know if they are going to stick it out and work hard with me. I really need to know. I get scared that I'll type something to my friends and they won't read it the way I meant it. I could lose all of my friends! I have no other way to talk to them. So I have to know that the facilitator likes me and will help me all the time.*

***I can talk best with Karen.*** *She holds my body just right and knows how to support my arm. She is also cool because she jokes around with me and the other kids. We always have fun. It's awesome when she is in the sixth grade because she pays close attention to me and notices when I touch my lips to show that I have something to say. She gets the communicator and she talks with me, or she gets the attention of one of my friends who I want to talk with. She also sees when I'm struggling and asks me if I want to take a break or do something different.*

*Once in a while it is even hard with Karen. I'll have something I really want to say and she or one of the kids will start talking on a different topic and the ask me a question. Well, I don't want to look dumb so I try to take the time to answer their question. Once I do though, they are already on another subject and I can't interrupt like they do when they talk. I can only interrupt if someone has my arm supported with the communicator there. Even then, when I started typing, people don't stop talking like they would if I had a voice. So sometimes it's hard.*

*Karen helps me though. She makes me feel normal and accepted. She will joke around and make me look good in front of my friends. I wish all facilitators were as great as Karen or that I could have her with me all the time.* ***I just don't know what I would do without her.***

*Oh good! I see her coming down the hall to take over from Marg. Now I'll get a chance to talk to Chad.*

Although Karen and I each had our own responsibilities as teacher and researcher, we collaborated and problem solved together. Often we would stay late at school or discuss issues over dinner. We made an effort to analyze what was happening and what we were learning, and commiserated over problems we could not solve. Much of the following section was generated during these discussions. It describes the major strategies we used to implement facilitated communicating in the general classroom. We present them as four major topics which you will undoubtedly encounter as you use facilitated communicating into general education classes. They are:

(1) Introducing facilitated communicating into the general education classroom.

(2) Adapting lessons and activities for students who use facilitated communicating.

(3) Adapting standardized testing for students using facilitated communicating, and

(4) Modifying IEPs for students using facilitated communicating.

## *(1) Introducing facilitated communicating into the general education classroom*

These strategies and suggestions we found helpful for introducing facilitated communicating in general education settings. The task can be broken into three steps: orienting teachers, preparing general education students, and introducing facilitating students to general education. The information can be applied to other settings as well.

### Conduct prearranged orientation sessions with general education teachers.

Every aspect of inclusive education requires advance preparation. This is especially important when introducing facilitated communicating into the classroom because you will be asking teachers to accept some totally new and largely unfamiliar concepts. They will be asked to begin to see that students they previously thought of as "retarded" may have hidden competencies, and are more capable than anyone thought possible; that these students' outward behaviors and verbalizations do not always reflect their true intentions; and that rather than producing as "independent" individuals, their assignments and other contributions will emerge

through a participation with other people.

These concepts are not readily grasped. They raise issues of authorship, credibility and trust, and problems with expectations, assignments and grading. Teachers are being asked to believe that students who seem so limited can convey sophisticated information when other people hold their fingers over keyboards. Skepticism is more than understandable! But we found most general education teachers were eager to hear about new ideas. We found it helpful to show videos of students facilitating, and tell them about the research on movement disturbance that could explain why our students' bodies will not do what their minds want them to.

We also did demonstrations of how to facilitate, stressing that it is *resistance* not *assistance* that is applied. Usually this was done without using facilitated students as models. We found that some teachers are eager to practice with facilitating students in their classes, but we assured them that it was not mandatory for them to do so. Also that they would not have to take more responsibility for the students being facilitated than they would for any other student in their classes.

We followed this overview with a discussion of ways to include facilitating students in classroom activites. We stressed these points:

a) Model interactions for the general education students. Help their assimilation into the class by addressing the students with the same respect, the same tone of voice and vocabulary used with general education students

b) Call on students by name for answers rather than asking a facilitator what a student has written. It is usually helpful when going over worksheets to give students using facilitated communicating an indication ahead of time that they were about to be called on. One strategy teachers used was to pause in front of their desks to indicate they would get the next question.

c) Wait for responses. While it is not necessary to keep a whole class waiting, recognize that nonverbal students may take time to process questions and formulate answers in addition to the extra time for typing. Come back to the student for answers.

d) Expect that students will be able to participate in lessons, even though they may have individualized objectives.

e) Don't be afraid to express the same humor used with other

students. We have found that humor can often help a student with a movement disturbance get "unstuck" in the same way it helps the rest of us switch mood or focus attention.

f) Praise students for typing ability, but also for everyday things which they accomplish irrespective of facilitated communicating. Some may have difficulty with innumerable small tasks that we accomplish without thought or effort. Recognizing and acknowledging these successes without dwelling upon them helps students feel seen, bolsters their self respect, and tightens the social bonds in the classroom.

### Teach lessons to general education classes about individuals' developmental special needs

Help orient students to the world of disability by demonstrating that most of the things we use constantly (e.g. shoes, pencil erasers, eyeglasses) are "accommodations" that help us overcome physical, intellectual, or sensory weakness. People who develop differently use other accomodations, such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, or the support of another person to accomplish their goals. Show videos of facilitated communicating. Emphasize that facilitators provide an accomodation that serves to steady and normalize communicators' arm and hand movements, and discuss how movement disturbances can mask competence, emotion, and social awareness.[3]

Demonstrate facilitated communicating and distribute alphabet sheets. With the class paired off, have students pass messages to partners by pointing to letters on the sheets. After they have experimented with that, have them do it again while partners offer resistance to their hand. Describe how that resistance can be an accommodation for a person who cannot voluntarily point out letters.

Invite each pair of students to add ten words or brief phrases in the margins of their alphabet boards that would make it easier for them to communicate. When this exercise is over compare the words they wrote in. Tabulate their suggestions and derive a class communication board.

Let general education students see electronic communicators and letterboards such as those that will be used in the classroom. Allow them to

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[3] See *"Movin' On"* series titles listed on inside rear cover; especially Hill D.A. & Leary, M.R. (1993) *Movement Disturbances: A Clue to Hidden Competencies in Persons Diagnosed with Autism and Related Disorders.*

touch and play with them. Designate a class period for students to communicate solely with letterboards.

Spend some time discussing how every person without speech is a unique individual—as different from other persons who are nonverbal as we are different from every other speaking person—and stress that a person who has no speech still has ideas to communicate. Use the example of Stephen Hawking, the scientist and writer who cannot control his voice or his movements but is an active researcher and philosopher and holds the Newton chair, one of the world's most prestigious professorships, at Cambridge University. Then give examples from personal experience of social and intellectual exchanges with nonverbal people.

Emphasize the importance of speaking to people without speech in the same way one addresses a friend or acquaintance. In particular stress the following:

a) Avoid "talking down" to students whose communications are facilitated.

b) Wait for responses to be typed out fully.

c) Include facilitated students in conversations.

d) Direct questions to the student, not to the facilitator who is with the student.

It may be helpful to distribute copies of Martha Leary's table, ***"Learning to Facilitate,"*** (see Appendix) and take time to discuss each point that she makes. Invite questions, discussion and personal anecdotes about people with disabilities who are friends or members of students' families.

### Introducing facilitating students to general education

From the start we made it a practice to seat students who were communicating with facilitation in groups with general education students as much as possible. This not only provided opportunities for social interactions but also made peers available to read off what was typed when that was appropriate. We asked the students being facilitated which peers they would be interested in having as part–time facilitators, then quietly invited the named students to take turns facilitating. Here are some other tactics that proved worthwhile:

a) When students are first integrated into a classroom, they may need to build up gradually the amount of time spent on academics. Continually check with students to ensure they are comfortable with the

situation. Suggest frequent breaks if a student seems to tire. Every aspect of facilitated communicating and integration can be exhausting, but the degree of fatigue varies a lot from time to time and from student to student.

b) Use cooperative learning groups—allow students to seek help from one another to achieve group goals.

c) Where possible encourage the general education teachers to practice facilitating. For example, the special education teacher can take over the class while the general education teacher facilitates a student's assignment or some other activity.

d) Encourage and assist general education peers to learn to facilitate with fellow students. Try to build the process into normal classroom etiquette, so that it becomes commonplace and accepted as a responsible and courteous act that anyone would perform.

e) If a letterboard or other communication device is not available at the time of an interaction, assign meaning to available objects. For example, a general education peer inviting a student to join in a game could say, "Touch the pencil for 'yes' or touch the paper for 'no.'"

f) Facilitate activities in all settings, not just those requiring or allowing for typed communications. Facilitate students to do such things as raise their hands, or choose game pieces for a board game. In particular facilitate reading. Many students show better comprehension when a partner holds a hand gently as the student follows the written words with a finger. A few learners with limited verbal ability are able to read out loud the words they type if their reading is facilitated.

g) Don't expect newly facilitating students to meet all the social and academic demands of the classroom at once. Many students who have spent years in self–contained special education classes have never had a formal curriculum. They may be unaccustomed to homework assignments, tests and quizzes. The major goal remains having students work on their personalized educational objectives.

At first you may want to target one or two subjects. We suggest that language arts be one of these subjects as it builds the skills needed for facilitated communicating. Don't get frustrated with the amount of work that is completed by the student, but instead value the effort that is being made. Try to highlight strengths of the student in front of general education peers. For example, by pointing out spelling skills during lessons.

### *(2) Adapting activities and lessons for students using facilitated communicating*

Lesson requirements were modified and creative methods were used to involve students in all aspects of the classroom. Specific examples of how these lesson adaptations were made are given next.

***Assignment***: Research and write a report on an animal on an endangered species list.

Ask the student to choose an animal to research. Have them go to the library and check out some relevant books. From the chosen volumes photocopy selected chapters and let the student read them. Then on each page ask which sentences, if any, should be included in a report. Ask the student to type the first few words of a sentence and then have the facilitator mark it with a highlighter. After this has been done for all the material, cut out the highlighted sentences from the photocopied pages. To organize the report, have the student sort the sentences into categories. (For example, sort under headings such as basic facts about the animal, habitat, foods eaten.) Have the student add some personal commentary or connecting sentences, if that is possible. Arrange sentences in this new order and tape them to clean sheets of paper. Photocopy the paste–up and submit the report.

***Assignment***: Each student is assigned a country or nation to study and asked to draw that country's flag.

The first part of the assignment is done like the previous example. Graphics exercises were very difficult for our students. Facilitated drawing was tried, but none of our students were pleased with the results. Instead of drawing, students using facilitated communication were asked to type directions to a peer on how a design should be drawn. For example, **"Draw a large blue circle in the middle of the page."**

We have heard several times that students in other settings have produced many forms of facilitated art work, and this is always worth a try. So far, we have not had any success with it.

*Assignment*: Each student is asked to design and create an original sign to advertise or promote an event or product.

After some careful thought, the student types the copy to appear on

the sign. Then using an enlarging photocopier the student is facilitated to enlarge the words to the size needed. Look through magazines with the student and with facilitated choosing point to selected pictures to be cut out and displayed on the sign. For example, **"BAKE SALE—THURSDAY—ROOM 121—BRING YOUR APPETITE!"** with pictures of donuts, danish, cakes, cookies, etc. pasted underneath.

### *(3) Modifying standardized testing to accommodate facilitated communication*

As every teacher knows, standardized tests are a fact of life in American schools. Based on the shaky assumption that they yield hard data about individual students they are used to evaluate progress, justify educational placements, and 'objectify' many other academic decisions. Our students who are nonverbal and move with difficulty fare poorly on all general tests administered in a standardized fashion; although sometimes their failures open doors to services more able students are denied. An essential prerequisite of standardized testing is that it represent a wholly independent effort by the student in which intrinsic abilities are called upon, measured—and subsequently ranked. Facilitated communicating—by its nature a joint effort, unstandardized and probably unstandardizable—was used nevertheless to develop test data on our students. It was no surprise that their scores rose. Throughout the country similarly raised test scores are helping students gain placement in general education classes.

We describe below how some testing procedures are modified to accomodate our students. In general, additional visual, auditory and tactile information is given in addition to facilitation.

#### *Mathematics testing*

Instead of simply placing a test sheet in front of a student, facilitators made sure that the questions were presented as clearly as possible. We found that some students could do some math problems in their heads, which was fine, except that they did not always type out the answers in the correct order—so that 275 might be typed, **"572,"** and it required an alert facilitator to realize what had happened. Generally it was better to work through math problems one step at a time. Although this changes the task for the student much useful information can be gained.

With math problems such as:

$$\begin{array}{r} 267 \\ +\,36 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Ask the student to type the number to appear in the one's column, then ask if a number needs to be carried to the ten's column. On a communicator or keyboard the student types **"y"** or **"n."** If, **"y"** is typed the student is asked to type the number to be carried. Then the student is asked what number should appear in the ten's column, and so on through the problem. The administrator writes in the student's responses on the test sheet.

When asked to order the numbers 52, 7, 12, 3, 21, from largest to smallest, have student using facilitated communication point to each number as the tester reads it aloud. Then ask the student to point to the numbers in the correct order. The administrator remains silent while recording the student's response. Many test items may be presented in a similar fashion.

The student is shown a picture with three pieces of string and asked to find the longest and shortest string. While being facilitated, the student runs a finger across whole length of each of the three pieces of string. The facilitator provides consistent support each time the student touches the string, allowing the student to receive kinesthetic and timing information. The student is then asked to find the longest yarn and then the shortest. To answer, the student is facilitated to touch the piece of string.

The student is shown a picture with three trees. While being facilitated, the student runs a finger across the whole width of each of the three trees. The facilitator provides consistent support each time the student touches a tree, allowing student to receive kinesthetic and timing information. Student is then asked quantitative questions about the pictures and is facilitated to respond by touching the picture or typing answers.

***Comprehension testing***

We sugest you try a variety of comprehension tests using three different conditions.

Condition I:

Readings and comprehension questions are visually presented to the student while the facilitator reads the material aloud.

Condition II:

Readings are visually presented while an instructor reads the material aloud with the facilitator absent. The facilitator returns to the room to hear and facilitate answers to the comprehension questions.

Condition III:

Readings and comprehension questions are visually presented while an instructor reads the passage and the questions aloud. The facilitator returns to the room to facilitate answers.

When we did this type of testing, we found a great deal of variablity in responses across conditions, topics and facilitators with varying levels of experience.

***Spelling tests***

The instructor read the word and asked the student to type in the letters. The instructor then read the letters back to the student, and asked if that is the way the word is spelled. If student responded, **"n,"** the question was repeated.

***Multiple Choice and True/False tests***

The facilitator or tester read the question and the possible answers aloud as the student looked at the written question. The student was then given as much time as needed to point with facilitation at the preferred answer, or type a symbol, **"t," "f"** or **"a," "b," "c,"** etc.

***Picture Story***

The facilitator read the instructions, "Look at the three pictures below and make up a good story to go with them. Take about five minutes to think about your story. Be sure to write a complete story using all three pictures. It is best to plan a whole story before you begin to write."

We asked students if it was easier to look at one picture at a time. When that was preferred the facilitator presented pictures sequentially. Students were invited to spend as much time as they needed with the pictures before typing their stories.

As a validity check, to investigate facilitator influence, and to get a more accurate representation of a student's ability we recommend that several facilitators administer selected items from tests. This also helps the students gain practice with different facilitators, and learn about their

abilities to express themselves in different situations.

Another way to accomplish this is to solicit language samples using different facilitators. We asked students to write a paragraph of at least five sentences on a specific topic. Then writing samples done with three or more facilitators were compared. With more experienced facilitators the students were able to express more sophisticated language and content.

We were struck by how clearly this suggests that communication is a joint endeavor. We envisage it like a dance that requires both partners to know at least some of both the steps and the music in order to perform it well. If one partner knows neither steps nor music little can be accomplished, but as the skills and knowledge of each partner improves so does the performance. The dance becomes really fluent and expressive only when both partners are thoroughly familiar with the music, the steps and each other's personality.

So it was with comprehension. Students could convey *some* information that was unknown to the facilitator, but as is true of any conversation when their facilitators knew the subject as well students were far more communicative.

### *(4) Examples of IEP objectives with facilitated communicating*

Writing an IEP (Individual Education Program) for a student using facilitated communicating can be complex and confusing. While it is important to include facilitation within objectives, other communication techniques must also be emphasized. There is a tendency to rely too heavily on facilitated communicating, even when other methods such as signing, pointing and vocalizations/verbalizations, may be easier and more appropriate.

In the careful assessment of current functioning, the student's attitudes, opinions, wants, needs and wishes gathered with facilitated communicating should all be considered when formulating individual objectives. The scope and accuracy of this information depends to some degree on the skill of the facilitator, and the influence of the facilitator on the student's communications. As these variables can be hard to assess, it is important to review as much information as possible from as many sources as are available.

While it is inappropriate to generalize about IEPs because they are all

by definition unique, we are offering some examples of how we incorporated facilitated communicating into typical IEP goals.

We have prepared some sample IEP goals for three domains: social skills and communication, academics, and self awareness. We have elaborated five IEP goals, and described some strategies to meet them.

***Social Skills and Communication***

**Goal**: The student will indicate a food choice during a community outing.

Procedure: The student will be given a wallet that has been modified to meet personal needs (e.g., have a velcro fastener rather than a zipper) containing a card with directions to be used when ordering food. The card could say:

> I WOULD LIKE_____PLEASE.
> PLEASE HELP ME BY TAKING MY MONEY OUT OF MY WALLET.
> COULD YOU ALSO PLACE MY CHANGE IN THE WALLET BEFORE YOU HAND IT BACK TO ME?
> IT HELPS IF YOU PUT MY FOOD IN A BAG INSTEAD OF ON A TRAY. THANKS.

By having a card already typed the student need only look at the store menu and type, with facilitated communicating, the food item desired. The typed strip can be attached to the card in the blank. The following strategies may be helpful:

Avoid verbal prompts from the instructor as they are very hard to fade. Allow only natural prompts from service person.[4]

If possible, provide physical assistance only when handing over and receiving the wallet.

This goal can be modified for many environments including: bank, library, classroom, grocery store, clothing store, bakery.

**Goal**: The student will participate in playing a language based game

[4] For much more about effecting behavior change see Donnellan A.M., Lavigna, G.W., Negri–Shoultz, N. & Fassbender, L.L. (1988). *Progress Without Punishment: Effective Approaches for Learners with Behavior Problems.* New York: Teachers College Press.

with peer and or staff facilitation.

The following strategies may be used:

Use facilitated communication to solicit student's choice of game and preferred players.

With either peer or staff facilitating the student takes a turn by pointing to correct card or game piece. Examples of games we have modified and played in this fashion include: Scrabble, Hangman, computer games, 20 Questions, UNO, Crazy Eights, and Old Maid.

***Additional Social Skills and Communication goals:***

The student will use words and phrases attached to a keyboard or letterboard to speed conversations.

Using facilitated communicating the student will respond to questions posed by peers.

The student will initiate communication by independently touching a communication device, making a sign, or vocalizing.

Using facilitation the student will ask for assistance from a peer or from adults.

With the use of facilitated communicating and other communication methods, student will respond to others' social greetings.

Presented with photographs of community locations (e.g.. restaurants, movie theatres, church, malls or arcades), the student will use facilitated pointing to choose an activity.

Using a calendar the student will schedule times for completing homework assignments with a facilitator.

***Academics***

**Goal**: Using various personally chosen reading materials with facilitated reading, student will demonstrate comprehension by answering "Wh" questions using a Canon, typewriter or letter board.

Helpful strategies that can be associated with facilitated communicating include:

Using tradebooks as teaching tools.

Teaching students how to look for the information using the table of contents and index.

Positioning materials where student can most readily read. We found that students who typed on letterboards presented at a steep angle

found it easier to read when books or pictures were displayed in similar fashion.

Encouraging students using facilitated communicating to point to the corner of the page to signify that it has been read.

Encouraging peers to read aloud to nonverbal students.

**Goal**: Using a calculator and facilitation the student will do two digit addition problems and be able to make purchases. Some issues to think about:

Adapt math materials to allow facilitation.

Adapt calculators to allow better access while facilitating. Some students find them easier to use when mounted and angled on a pedestal. Unused memory keys that may be hit in error can be masked with carboard and tape, and function keys can be color coded. Shop for models that appeal to individual students if you can. Some people prefer keys that click or beep. Others need large or well separated keys.

Use calculators with print readouts for ease of record keeping.

Provide facilitation for purchasing. For example, place money on the table and ask the student to select the money required for a transaction. Facilitate choice of bills and coins from the money on the table.

***Additional academic goals:***

Using a menu or grocery list and a calculator student will be facilitated to calculate total cost with sales tax of a meal or shopping list.

The student will construct a brief report with grammatically correct sentences on a formal topic.

When presented with a page of line drawings of ingredients and a recipe, the student will use facilitated pointing and a letterboard to indicate how the recipe should be prepared.

When using facilitated communicating the student will consistently include a space between words in all transcripts.

***Self Awareness***

**Goal**: The student will indicate a need to use the bathroom.

The following strategies could be used:

Initially the student may have scheduled bathroom times. Teachers may ask student in between these times if the student needs to use the

bathroom. The student will be facilitated to answer **"y"** or **"n."**.

**Goal**: With the letters "Y" an "N" printed above the toilet paper in the bathroom stall, the student will use facilitation to answer questions such as, "Would you like some privacy?" "Do you need more time?" and, "Are you finished?"

***Additional Self Awareness goals:***

The student will use facilitated communication, a manual sign, a picture, a vocalization or a verbalization to indicate the need to use the bathroom.

The student will use facilitated communication, a manual sign, a card, a vocalization or a verbalization to indicate a desire for a break.

When presented with clothing choices, the student will point with facilitation to desired items to indicate dress preferences.

The student will identify and communicate that he/she needs assistance in solving a problem.

After asking for assistance with a problem, the student will use facilitated communication to convey any emotional, sensory or movement issues influencing the problem.

Using facilitated communicating, student will assist with offering possible solutions to the problem.

# IV

## Reflections on a Revolution

We have been working with students using facilitated communicating for almost three years. In that time:

**We have seen** individuals start using facilitated communication after one session in which they produced sentences or even paragraphs, while others have labored over months of sessions and never typed a whole word, or been offered the easier option of facilitation of pictures or object choices.

**We have seen** individuals using facilitated communication develop and establish their own independent personality while others seemed to adopt characteristics of their facilitators.

**We have seen** individuals using facilitated communicating make what we would consider very bad judgment calls, and we have also seen young children grapple with adult issues and exercise wisdom and sound judgement in making decisions about their lives.

**We have seen** expectations placed on children and adults using facilitated communicating which we would not want placed on ourselves, and we have seen professional staff appropriately modifying expectations to address an individual student's well-being.

**We have seen** practitioners who value and support all forms of communicative behavior and vocalization by the persons with whom they work, and we have seen others ignore what we would regard as clear attempts to communicate.

**We have seen** professionals valuing only students whose facilitated communications imply high academic abilities, and others working with and valuing a wide range of achievement among their students.

**We have seen** professionals dismiss facilitated communicating, claiming that it entirely produced by the facilitator, while others

acknowledge the complexity of the communicative process and look forward to gaining an understanding of the collaboration between facilitators and the communicators.

**We have seen** students perform at grade level with a facilitator who is skilled and knowledgeable in the content area, while struggling with similar concepts with another less skilled facilitator.

This does not mean that we think facilitated communication is bogus, nor that we think that students never say anything original or without facilitator influence.

**We have seen** students present information unknown to the facililtator. That does not mean that students are never influenced by facilitators.

**We have seen** both sides of the coin, and while heads and tails look quite different, in reality the two sides form one coin.

We believe that ethical standards should be developed to assist people in framing facilitated communicating into a just context; keeping in mind that it is one accommodation used to assist persons with challenges.

We recall a quote by Jordan Weinroth, a young man labelled autistic, who typed, **"I feel that facilitated communication could become just another technique for torturing people with autism."**

Facilitation is not the only way to accommodate, and may not be the best way to accommodate, or the best way to communicate. People who are facilitating communication should not get caught up in demanding only typed output. Professionals and parents must continue to look at the whole individual and not limit their view to the written words produced. Looking at a transcript is too narrow an approach, for the written word does not incorporate tone, gestures, pitch, volume and possibly feeling when a message was typed. Unaided speakers rely on far more than their words to convey the meaning or intent of their messages.

We would say to those of you involved in facilitated communication or thinking about getting started:

You can not be all things to the people you are facilitating, nor can you meet all of the demands that may be placed on you. Be proud the effort you put forth, just as you are proud of your student, your client or your child. Connect with others and support one another. It is especially helpful to find others who are facilitating.

Set your personal boundaries and stay grounded in other areas of your life to avoid getting narrowly focused in your outlook on facilitated communicating and resistant to others' cautions/suggestions/input.

Identify your limits to the individual who you are facilitating.

If you find students having difficulties maintaining boundaries, seek out a counselor or other person who will help them build their self esteem and encourage them to make their *own* decisions and hold their *own* opinions.

Put safeguards in place. One of the most vital is informing parents and obtaining permission when working with children and other dependents.

Work as a team, determine a team consensus on the implementaion and use of facilitated communicating.

Don't disregard body movements, behaviors, or speech. Be aware that on occasion some movements/behaviors or speech may not be intentional, while at other times it is communicative.

Since we are working toward normalization and having individuals with disabilities accepted by others, encourage persons using facilitated communicating, to get involved in activities and discussions that are age appropriate and relevant to what is occurring in the classroom or home setting.

Don't expect that facilitated communicating will solve an individual's behavior, academic and or sensory issues.

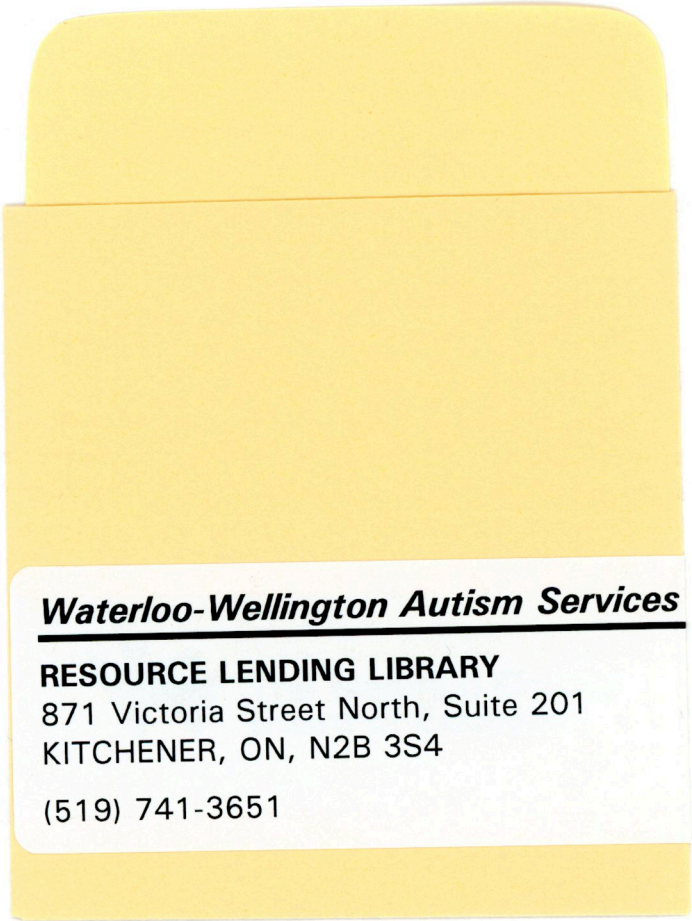
Place reasonable expectations on individuals, remembering that you have a responsibility to teach the skills they need.

Expect users of facilitated communicating to be like typical speakers in their use of fictitious, manipulative and exaggerated statements.

Above all else value the person for who he or she is, not what he or she can or cannot do.

We hope that these reflections and suggestions make your journey with facilitated communicating less "rocky." No two journeys will be identical, but we hope we have provided you with a useful "road map." This book is an attempt to help decrease the chances of others getting caught in detours or stuck in the potholes. Remember to take a steady pace, noticing the details along the way rather than making a hurried and hazy trip.

You are bound to see many sights along the way. Enjoy your journey!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# Appendix

*Learning to Facilitate,* which is reproduced on the following page courtesy of its author, Martha Leary, encapsulates the process of becoming a facilitator. It was prepared as an overhead, but has been reproduced in many forms. We believe that a copy on the refrigerator door would not be out of place. Feel free to use it in any fashion that will promote better understanding of human diversity.

# Learning to Facilitate

by Martha Leary, MA SLP-CCC

Understand that facilitators are learners too.

Assemble a team to support your efforts.

Examine the attitudes and beliefs you hold regarding people with movement problems and/or no speech.

Reflect on how your attitudes and beliefs effect your interactions with people with no speech.

Practice sharing information with a person without demanding indicators of attention.

Have interactions without asking questions or giving instructions.

Share information at a more sophisticated level: provide details, express opinions, tell about yourself.

Express your changing perception of apparent disabilities. Express your desire to learn to be a facilitator.

Read something aloud that you think may be of interest to a person you would like to facilitate.

Enhance that person's image in front of others. Express confidence in the person's abilities .

Practice facilitation with friends, family or colleagues.

Make a communication book for yourself. Practice using it with colleagues and your team.

Keep pen and paper handy to write choices available. Use facilitation to check preferences.

Begin using facilitation to offer choices.

Incorporate use of your communication book during conversation or reading aloud (e.g. What do you think of that? Do you want me to continue?).

During conversations or interactions jot down key words or phrases which are interesting and may facilitate choices. Practice "copy typing," and thank your communicator for helping you learn.

Facilitate participation in table games (Scrabble, Checkers, Hangman, Battleships, etc.) and word games.

As your skills improve offer choices verbally and ask for facilitated answers on a letterboard or keyboard.

Accept partial responsibility for mistakes or unintelligible answers. Express confidence you will improve with practice

When you feel ready, offer to facilitate without asking a question.

Keep trying, and move at your own speed.

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*A candid, practical account of the classroom challenges for Special Education and other teachers, administrators and parents.*

For prices and availability write to: DRI Press, PO 5202, Madison, WI 53705
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***"Movin' On"* Beyond Facilitated Communicating** is a series of short books written by clinicians, parents, administrators and advocates, with the cooperation of facilitating communicators, that introduce readers to the changes created by Facilitated Communicating. It is the editors' goal to provide up to date information, experience and opinion in a form accessible to everyone interested in the the welfare of people labeled developmentally disabled. Many of the topics presented in the series are still being researched by the scientific and academic communities. Every attempt will be made to keep the information current, as in a rapidly developing field such as this we believe that all concerned need to share their experiences even as we await the research results. The solution to complex situations we face will come from dialogue among practitioners, researchers and consumers. We hope this series contributes to that dialogue.

**Making Connections: Facilitated Communicating in an Inclusive Classroom** is a personal and practical account of the first year that facilitated communicating students joined their peers in general education classes. It begins with a narrative of the year, highlighting the many moments of drama and change that created a minor revolution in the classroom. It continues with sections dealing with some practical problems that were faced and overcome; such as difficulties with time and privacy. The authors detail a series of clear guidelines for the introduction of facilitated communicating students into the general education curriculum: the orientating of general education teachers and students, and the preparation of facilitated students for the demands of the classroom. Sections on standardized tests, IEP preparation, and goal setting offer proven ideas and practices. The book ends with a summary of major points, and some DOs and DON'Ts that will help educators, administrators and parents provide smoother transitions to general education for their facilitated students and children.

In her Foreword, **Dr. Anne M. Donnellan** puts this important text into the context of twentieth century psychological thought and educational policy. She pulls no punches in a brisk account of the failures of both science and society to understand and care about diversity in people and personalities. Dr. Donnellan concludes with a brief discussion of how new understanding of motor disorders and the introduction of facilitated communicating are are leading to a revolutionary new perspective in education and psychology.

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